

## The MAG Regional Council

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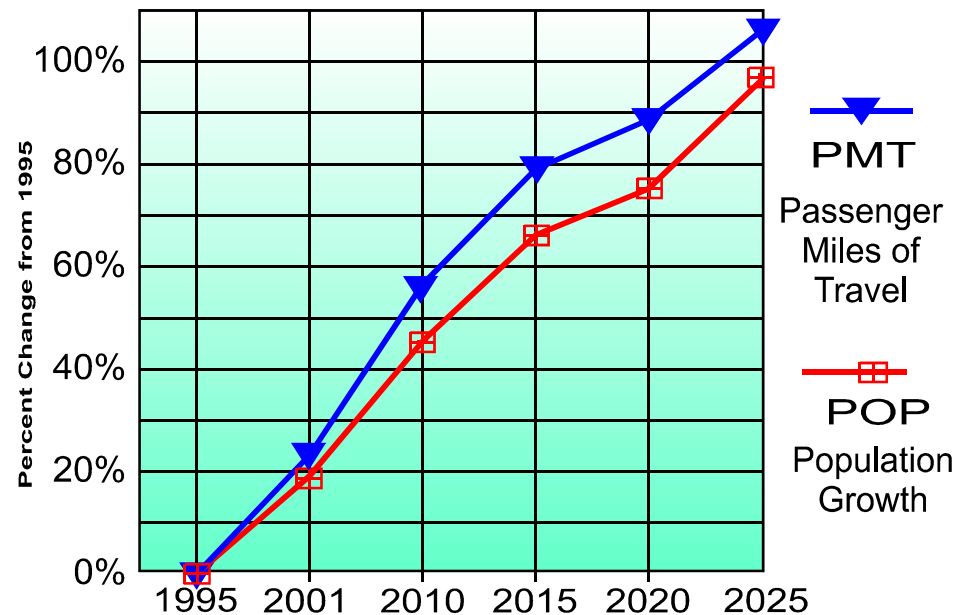
**Mayor Douglas Coleman**,  
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\*\* Executive Committee Member

## Growth and Congestion Require Action

It comes as no surprise that our county is the fastest growing in the United States. In fact, the Valley just surpassed three million in population and could even reach six million or more by 2040! Even though existing regional plans call for considerable expansion of the transportation system, the explosive growth in the region will make it difficult for transportation investments to “keep up.” Due to a variety of social changes, residents are traveling more miles and making more trips than ever before – and will travel even more in the coming years. Given the projected growth for the region over the next twenty years, every viable transportation option must be examined to assess its potential to meet future travel needs. Using a variety of transportation options to meet mobility needs is often referred to as “multi-modal” transportation. This newsletter describes major planning efforts that are underway to help meet the transportation needs of the Valley.

The Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG) is a regional agency made up of the Valley communities working together to ensure a better quality of life. MAG is the designated Metropolitan Planning Organization for transportation planning for the metropolitan Phoenix area. MAG is made up of the 24 incorporated cities and towns within Maricopa County, the Gila River Indian Community, the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community, and Maricopa County itself. MAG is also the designated Air Quality Planning Agency for the region. The governing body of MAG is the Regional Council (see box, left). The agency is charged with developing regional policies and plans in areas such as transportation, air quality, land use, water quality, solid waste and human services.



*Growth in Population and Travel.*

## New Regional Transportation Plan



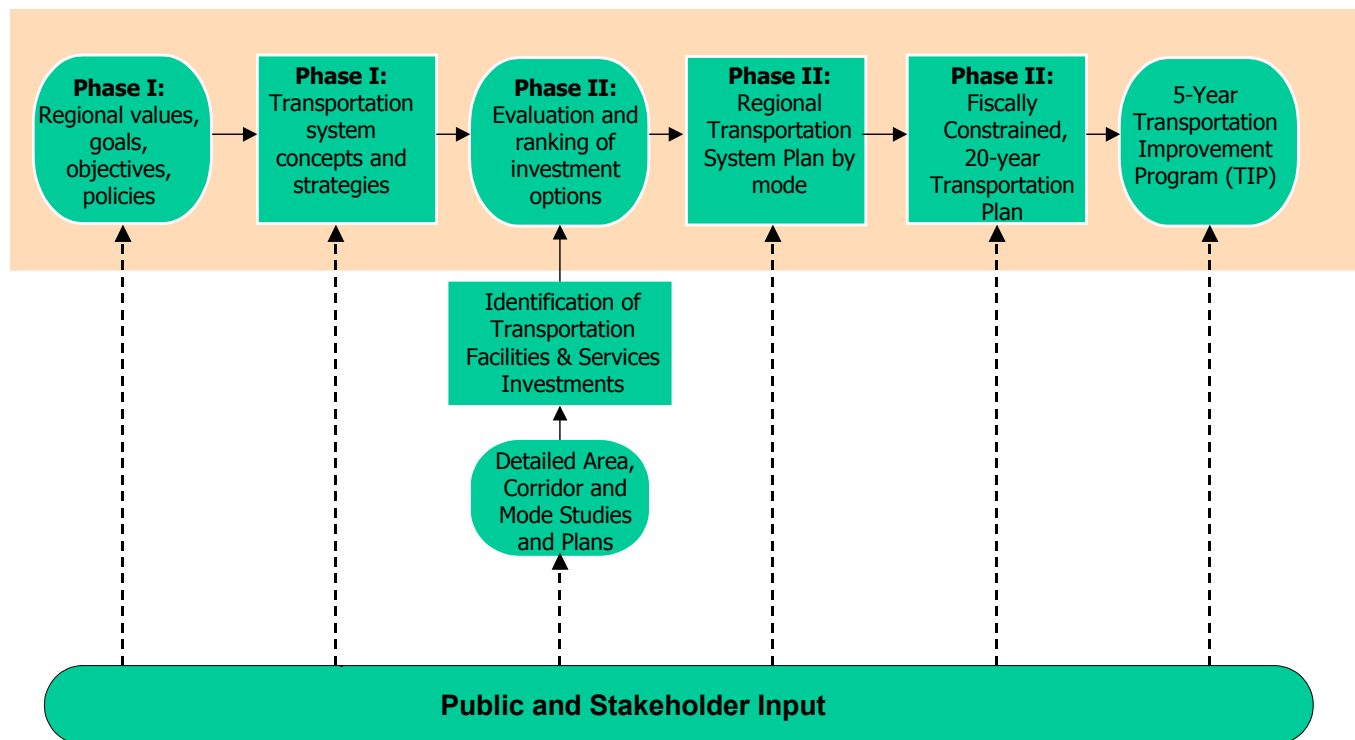
MAG is currently developing a Regional Transportation Plan (RTP), the largest planning initiative in four decades. The last such exercise set the blueprint for regional freeways that are now nearing

completion. The new RTP will address the sustained growth that is expected over the next four or five decades. It will provide a new policy framework to guide regional transportation investments and establish measures of performance to better monitor and improve the transportation system in the future. Using this information, the RTP will also identify and prioritize specific transportation projects needed to keep up with the increasing travel demands in the region. Upon its completion, the RTP will result in a

major revision to the current adopted Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP), which identifies specific projects and facilities for investments over the next twenty years. The LRTP is typically updated annually.

Development of the RTP is in two phases. Phase I is currently underway and is scheduled for completion in Spring, 2002. It focuses on defining policies and goals, and analyzes different regional growth scenarios. Phase II will identify specific projects to meet regional goals developed in Phase I. Different investment alternatives will be evaluated and ranked using results from Phase I. Projects will include all forms of transportation such as roadways, transit, bicycle and pedestrian projects and will include funding from both federal and regional sources. The result will be a new multi-modal transportation plan to meet future travel needs.

**For more information, contact:** Eric Anderson, MAG Transportation Manager, (602) 254-6300, [eanderson@mag.maricopa.gov](mailto:eanderson@mag.maricopa.gov)



*Regional Transportation Plan Process*

There are several studies underway that will help provide input to the RTP. These efforts include three sub-region transportation studies, the East/West Mobility Study, the Freeway Bottleneck Study, the High Capacity Transit Plan and the Regional Transit System Study.

## **Sub-Region Transportation Studies**

MAG has initiated three studies to identify multi-modal transportation projects that reflect specific conditions and concerns in each sub-region. The identified needs and supporting background information from the study will help guide future transportation planning for the area. Agency, public and stakeholder consultation will be a critical ongoing element of the studies. Three studies were initiated in early 2002:

- Northwest Area Transportation Study
- Southeast Maricopa/Northern Pinal County Area Transportation Study
- Southwest Area Transportation Study, conducted in association with the Central Arizona Association of Governments (CAAG)

Major projects identified in the area studies will be assessed with other regional projects as part of the RTP process. Each study will identify travel characteristics and patterns and recommend transportation options to meet the needs of travelers in each sub-region. The studies are expected to be completed in the Fall of 2002.

### **For more information, contact:**

**Northwest and Southwest Area Studies:** Chris Voigt, MAG Project Manager, (602) 254-6300, [cvoigt@mag.maricopa.gov](mailto:cvoigt@mag.maricopa.gov)

**Southeast Maricopa/Northern Pinal County Area Transportation Study:** Roger Herzog, MAG Project Manager, (602) 253-6300, [rherzog@mag.maricopa.gov](mailto:rherzog@mag.maricopa.gov)

Brent Billingsley, CAAG Project Manager, (520) 689-5004, [bbillingsley@CAAGCentral.org](mailto:bbillingsley@CAAGCentral.org)

## **East/West Mobility Study**

The East/West Mobility Study will assess options for east-west traffic flow in an area between Thunderbird/Waddell Road and Northern Avenue, extending from Loop 303 west to State Route 51. The overall goal of the study is to recommend strategies to improve east/west traffic flow. Completion of the study is expected in Summer, 2002. Results of the study will be considered in the RTP process.

**For more information, contact:** Roger Herzog, MAG Project Manager, (602) 253-6300, [rherzog@mag.maricopa.gov](mailto:rherzog@mag.maricopa.gov)

## **Freeway Bottleneck Study**

The Freeway Bottleneck study will collect current traffic information and forecast future traffic conditions for the year 2040. This information will be analyzed to determine where bottlenecks are occurring on freeways (both now and in the future) and to identify solutions to help remove or alleviate these bottlenecks. A safety review of the regional freeway system will also be included in the study, and projects will be prioritized. This study is expected to be completed in the Fall of 2002. Results of the study will be considered in the RTP process, and the traffic data collected will be used by cities and other private organizations for traffic studies.

**For more information, contact:** Qing Xia, MAG Project Manager, (602) 254-6300, [qxia@mag.maricopa.gov](mailto:qxia@mag.maricopa.gov)



## High Capacity Transit Plan

This study will evaluate the possible use of existing railroad corridors for commuter rail, estimate the costs and benefits of this service, and assess how it would interact with other types of transit (such as buses) and roadways. In some corridors, the operation of conventional commuter rail may encounter significant obstacles. Other high capacity transit technologies, such as bus rapid transit or light rail, may be more appropriate in these corridors. There may still be other areas of the MAG region without railroad rights-of-way where new high capacity transit may be warranted. Initiated in January, 2002, the study will be completed in approximately one year. The results of the plan will be considered in the RTP process.

**For more information, contact:** Dawn M. Coomer,  
MAG Multi-Modal Program Manager, (602) 254-6300,  
[dcoomer@mag.maricopa.gov](mailto:dcoomer@mag.maricopa.gov).

## Regional Transit System (RTS) Study

Initiated by Valley Metro, the RTS Study will develop guidance in the implementation of future bus and dial-a-ride services. The study will analyze existing transit networks for bus and dial-a-ride services. Using twenty-year growth projections, the existing transit networks will be compared with future needs to determine the gap between current service levels and future demand for transit service. This information will be used to identify new transit projects that could be implemented over the next twenty years. Key regional issues, such as providing coordinated public transportation in a large service area, will be addressed. The RTS study is expected to be completed by December, 2002. The results of the RTS will provide input into the RTP process.

**For more information, contact:** Stuart Boggs, Valley  
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